

# Controversial issue in jane eyre



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Every topic in life can be portrayed as a controversial issue. There always have been two sides to every discussion and there always will be two sides. In the novel Jane Eyre, feminism is portrayed as the main controversial issue. In the early 19th century, women lived in a world that measures the likelihood of their success by the degree of their “marriageability”, which would have included their family connections, economic status and beauty. Women were also subject to the generally accepted standards and roles that society had placed upon them, which did not necessarily provide them with liberty, dignity or independence. This novel explores how Jane defies these cultural standards by her unwillingness to be defined by “marriageability”, unwillingness to submit herself to a man’s emotional power and her desire for independence while keeping her dignity.

Jane does not allow her goals to rest solely upon marrying. Although Rochester’s betrayal sends her into depression, she tells St. John that she could be perfectly happy as a simple teacher with her own school and a few students. Jane’s attitude toward Mr. Rochester, when he attempts to impress her with jewels and expensive clothes for her wedding starts to prove her role as a feminist. In fact, she says that “the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation” (Bronte 236). Her unwillingness to be objectified is the best indication that she does not define herself by two of the “marriageability” components; economic status and beauty. The act of Jane leaving Mr. Rochester shows her courage.

By this decision, she both defies the Victorian expectation of submitting to a man’s will, which would be acting as Rochester’s mistress and shows that

she can break from the emotional power that Rochester has over her.

Though it is hard for her to leave, because she did in fact fall in love with him, she musters up the courage to leave a life of security, promise and love for the unknown, refusing to let this man maintain his grip on her heart. In addition, her refusal to become a mistress shows that she has maintained a certain dignity, refusing to give in to her physical and emotional desires that could be seen as bad-mannered by society.

Jane also refuses to give in to a man's attempts to have authority over her by refusing St. John's demand that she marry him for reasons that she does not agree with. And St. John also admits he does not love her and but then tries to use his religious views as an excuse to persuade her into marrying him. He even attempts to make her feel guilty by saying that God would not be pleased with two people living together with "a divided allegiance: it must be entire" (Bronte 357).

By making this claim, he implies that God would only be happy if St. John had full and complete ownership of Jane. She does not give in because it had pained her to realize that her marriage might be based on a lifestyle for which she had no desire and a partnership with the absence of true love. Jane's desire for independence was obvious since Jane's early childhood experiences at Gateshead where she was subject to the cruelty of Aunt Reed. This woman shows the young girl no love and wishes to have ultimate authority over her mind and spirit, similar to St.

John's intentions. Her punishment of locking Jane in the Red Room develops a central characteristic in the young girl: the desire to survive with dignity.

Jane tells Aunt Reed that this violent action is an injustice and that she cannot live in this unloving environment. She displays courageous defiance to Mr. Brocklehurst in answer to his question about where evil children are sent after death. This scene emphasizes her willpower to stand up to a man. Her defiance of authority, or at least, those who try to exert authority over her, is proof of this statement.

Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester and St. John each drew from her a certain defiance that portrayed her as nothing less than resilient and passionate. The fact that Jane refuses to give part of her nature to the will of any of these men shows that she does not consider herself below them, but wishes to maintain a dignified, independent self, free from their demands and desires. Though Jane does not announce to the world that she is trying to begin any type of feminist movement, her actions and decisions could set a model for any forward-thinking woman in the mid-19th century.

St. John's opinion that her "words are such as ought not to be used: violent, unfeminine, and untrue" (Bronte 363) seem to be Bronte's hint that indeed, Jane's actions were not typical of a woman in that era. As been proved, this novel does in fact explore how Jane defies the cultural standards by her unwillingness to be defined by "marriageability", unwillingness to submit herself to a man's emotional power and her desire for independence while keeping her dignity.